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Bristol Bay Borough

NAKNEK, SOUTH NAKNEK, AND KING SALMON, ALASKA

March 15, 2000

Senator Ted Stevens
522 Hart Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-0201

Dear Senator Stevens:

I am writing to you at the request of the Bristol Bay Borough Assembly. As its manager, I believe this may be one of the most important letters I have ever been asked to write for them. The critical importance of the subject matter causes deep concern & a resulting urgency experienced I believe, by the vast majority of Borough residents.

You are no doubt aware, that the school children from South Naknek are among the very few, if not the only school children in these United States, required to fly to and from school each day. This practice, which has continued for too many years, is made necessary by the division of the villages of Naknek and South Naknek by the Naknek River.

Our school children are routinely required to fly in the worst possible weather. High winds, blinding snow and severe rains do not very often delay flights. Day after day, year after year, parents in South Naknek watch their children climb into the small planes and disappear across "the river". They are headed to school, a basketball game or some other school related function. To date, there have been very few accidents or incidents but in the back of our minds we all fear the odds and dread the day when our luck may run out.

The residents of South Naknek have grappled for years over the concept of a direct transportation link to the "outside". Being an Alaskan, I sure do not need to explain to you what turmoil issues like this can cause. I am therefore, very excited to report to you that at a recent South Naknek Village Council "town meeting", the residents of South Naknek overwhelmingly voted (54 to 7) in support of a link to the road system via a bridge and the Alaska Peninsula highway, and further, have requested that the borough do everything within its power to help get "the bridge" constructed over the Naknek River.

The State of Alaska DOT/PF has given the Naknek River Bridge Project an excellent "cost to benefit" ratio, second only in the Southwest Transportation Plan to the Pile Bay/Williamsport Road Project. Certainly all the positive impacts of a bridge to South Naknek cannot be accurately assessed nor completely identified within this letter, but, it is known that Bristol Bay Borough

could consolidate its schools, landfill & dock operations, and, provide better EMS, Fire and Police protection at a greatly reduced cost. We believe that the electric co-op's and telephone company's cost of operations would be reduced as well, if they had access to South Naknek via "the bridge". With year round, 24/7 access, it would no longer be necessary for any entity to house high-priced duplicate pieces of equipment in South Naknek. This one single fact equates to huge savings in the operating costs for all involved. In addition, transportation costs of freight, heating oil, propane, mail and fisheries products would almost certainly be lowered. The list goes on and on.

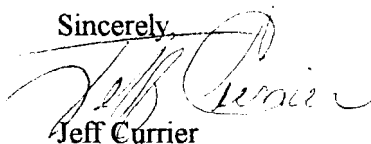
The South Naknek Bridge Project addresses more than just "saving the money". Students from "the bush" typically have a harder time to make it in the outside world. Generally, the less exposure students are afforded, the greater the level of difficulty they experience. The Borough wants the students from South Naknek to have every opportunity to fully participate in all school activities and experience all of the social structure our school system/community has to offer. Regardless of how hard our school district tries, South Naknek's students do not always have that opportunity. A river runs through it.

In most communities "flying school buses" would have been reason enough to get a bridge built, probably decades ago. We are asking for you help to permanently ground our "flying school buses." We are asking for your strong support for this project. Bristol Bay Borough's voice is not at all powerful in the State & Federal government. Our population is small. We have not been able to afford a Lobbyist for several years now. We will work with Senator Lyman Hoffman and Rep. Carl Moses and the Alaska State DOT planners to elevate the "ranking" of the South Naknek Bridge Project within their system. A greater uncertainty for us comes at the Federal funding level.

Thanks to your efforts and to those of the entire Alaska delegation in Washington D.C., there appears to be federal highway funding "out there". We have done some preliminary investigation and understand a funding formula might potentially "shake out" to equal a 90% Federal, 7% BIA and 3% State and local government split. That would be extremely attractive. We think that "now" is the right time to make this request if this project is ever to become a reality. We know this to be a "no pork/all substance, grass roots/basic needs" project. It will be a "Win-Win" for every entity involved. We believe the South Naknek Bridge Project to be economically justifiable, technically do-able and culturally beneficial.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. I have attached copies of a petition and letters of support for the Bridge to South Naknek for your information and use. We expect that numerous additional letters of support will be available in the near future. If there are questions or if your office requires anything regarding this proposed project, please feel free to contact me at the above listed numbers or via e-mail at [jcurrier @ bristolbay.com](mailto:jcurrier@bristolbay.com)

Sincerely,



Jeff Currier

Borough Manager

enclosures